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E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/09/2019
TAGS: [MARR](#) [PREL](#) [US](#) [AJ](#) [AF](#)
SUBJECT: EVALUATING AZERBAIJAN FACILITIES IN
SUPPORT OF AFGHANISTAN OPERATIONS

REF: A. BAKU 266
[1](#)B. STATE 30032

Classified By: PM A/S Andrew Shapiro, reasons
1.4(b) and (d)

SUMMARY

[1](#)1. (S) Department requests that Post draw on the objectives and background below to assess the receptivity of the Government of Azerbaijan (GOAJ) to a U.S. assessment team to evaluate Heydar Aliyev International Airport to supplement the network of facilities and routes that support U.S., allied and coalition military operations in Afghanistan. Specifically, DoD is considering several facilities to support aerial refueling or personnel and cargo transload missions. If the GOAJ is amenable, post should request immediate permission from the GOAJ for DoD to send a technical assessment team to Baku and report response no later than July 30 via front-channel cable to Washington. End summary.

[1](#)2. (C) During a July 10-11 visit to Baku, Deputy Secretary Steinberg met with President Aliyev and discussed a broad range of bilateral and regional issues, including possible next steps to increase security cooperation. Points below could be raised in that context.

OBJECTIVES

[1](#)3. (S/REL AZE) Department instructs post to pursue the following objectives:

-- Follow up on discussion with President Aliyev (REF A) regarding Azerbaijan's support for our efforts in Afghanistan.

-- Inform the GOAJ that we have a shared

interest in ensuring the success of the international effort to stabilize and rebuild Afghanistan, along with a shared responsibility to support this effort actively and in concrete ways. The United States commends and is deeply appreciative of Azerbaijan's robust support to U.S. forces and operations. However, the level of violence in Afghanistan continues to escalate and all members of the international community must do their part to try to reverse this trend.

-- Inform the GOAJ that the USG is evaluating many potential logistical avenues supporting operations in Afghanistan to supplement other facilities in the region.

-- Inform the GOAJ that the USG has done a preliminary assessment of facilities throughout the region and determined that Heydar Aliyev International Airport, among other sites (REF B), may be well-suited to support regional U.S., NATO, and coalition operations.

-- Request the GOAJ's permission to send a U.S. military assessment team to Baku for 4-5 days as soon as possible to conduct site surveys and airfield assessments. This team will have approximately 10 members and will gather the detailed information that our military planners need to determine if the facilities are suitable for U.S., NATO, and coalition operations, and to determine the time and resources needed to prepare for the proposed mission. Make no commitments beyond conducting a site survey.

-- Request GOAJ assistance in avoiding media or public attention to the team's presence.

REPORTING DEADLINE:

14. (U) Please report host government responses by cable to both State (PM/RSAT), and DoD (OSD/ISA and OSD/APSA) as soon as possible, no later than July 30.

BACKGROUND:

15. (U) In partnership with host governments, the U.S. Government maintains access to a network of facilities and routes that support U.S., allied and coalition military operations in Afghanistan. Among them, Manas serves as a staging and support point for aerial refueling tankers, and for U.S. troops, air crews, other personnel and cargo enroute to Afghanistan. It also hosts Spanish cargo planes and French aerial refuelers.

16. (U) On June 25, the Kyrgyz Parliament ratified two new agreements for use of Manas International Airport as a transport and logistics hub for the mission in Afghanistan. The transit hub is designed to provide logistical support and personnel rotations into and out of Afghanistan. Kyrgyz President Bakiyev reportedly signed the law ratifying the Manas agreements on July 12. The next step is for the Kyrgyz MFA to send the United States a note confirming that the Kyrgyz side has completed all necessary steps for the agreements to come into force.

17. (S/REL AZE) Though we are pleased that Kyrgyzstan has come to a new agreement to continue our access at Manas, CENTCOM, with

support from U.S. European Command (EUCOM), continues to look for facilities that could supplement the aerial refueling and personnel and cargo transload missions currently performed out of Manas. EUCOM intends to send a site survey and airfield assessment team upon receiving host nation permission to evaluate the viability of Heydar Aliyev International Airport for the aerial refueling mission. CENTCOM and EUCOM will also look at the level of funding and infrastructure improvements that will be required, and from there will estimate the time that it will take to bring the facility up to initial and full operating capacity.

18. (S/REL AZE) Preliminary estimates of Heydar Aliyev International Airport indicate that the U.S. would aim to secure rights to use runway and ramp space for between 10 to 15 KC-135 aircraft and possibly two large cargo aircraft (e.g., C-17 or C-5), as well as the presence of U.S. military personnel in Azerbaijan needed to support the refueling mission. The U.S. would not refer to an expanded use of Heydar Aliyev International Airport as a base. If U.S. personnel were to be stationed in Baku, they would require protections beyond those offered by the NATO Partnership for Peace SOFA. This would require, at a minimum, a bilateral agreement of limited duration that provides additional status protections to U.S. Department of Defense personnel.

POINT OF CONTACT

19. Please contact PM/RSAT - Daniel Wartko at (202) 647-6391, WartkoDJ@state.sgov.gov for further information. Please cc OSD - Peter Jeydel, at 703-697-1434, Peter.Jeydel@osd.smil.mil and Dan Melleby, (703) 571-0234, Daniel.Melleby@osd.smil.mil.
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